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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9069
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 2531
RUCNTXD/AMEMBASSY MAJURO PRIORITY 0057
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY 3814
RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA PRIORITY 0164
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5060
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1859
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4609
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1996
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2667
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0815
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001006

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SUBJECT: PAPUA -- KEY MINING TOWN AWAITS ELECTION RESULTS

REF: JAKARTA 874

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4 (b+d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Papua's Mimika District--the site of a giant mine owned by U.S. company Freeport-McMoRan--voted for local officials on May 19. The Election Commission is still counting the results. The race was heatedly contested and observers expect the losing side to challenge the results. The area is volatile politically with various tribal/ethnic flashpoints. Given that and the extensive mining interests in the region, the GOI and Freeport are monitoring the situation closely. END SUMMARY.

VOTING IN A KEY PAPUAN REGION

12. (U) Residents of Mimika District--the south-central Papua region in eastern Indonesia that his home to Freeport-McMoRan's mining operations--voted for local officials on May 19. Four pairs of candidates vied for the positions of bupati (district head) and vice bupati. The vote was peaceful and free of major controversy. (Note: The district, home to approximately 200,000 residents is the site of Freeport-McMoran's Grasberg Mine--the world's largest producer of gold and second largest producer of copper. Nearly 20,000 people work at Freeport's operation; approximately 2 percent expatriates, the remainder Indonesians.)

13. (SBU) One minor problem centered on approximately 3,000 district residents who did not register to vote by the deadline. Most of these individuals are recent migrants to the region and many illegally mine for gold in the Freeport mine's tailings. All the candidates called for the migrants to be allowed to vote. Election officials eventually complied with this demand and--despite some confusion--the migrants were allowed to vote.

A CLOSE RACE

14. (C) The race appears very close. Sources within the

Election Commission said Yoseph Yopi Kilangin and Yohannes Helyanan--backed by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) and a coalition of other parties--have a slim lead over Klemen Tinal and H. Abd Muis--backed by Golkar and allied parties. In the heated race, each ticket has won approximately 30 percent of the total votes cast and the margin between them is less than 500 votes.

15. (SBU) The Election Commission hopes to announce the official results by May 23. Sources we spoke to said it was unlikely the Commission would be able to meet that deadline, however.

AN ELECTORAL CHALLENGE?

16. (C) Under Indonesian election law, a pair of candidates must win over 25 percent of the votes cast to avoid a runoff.

Both Kilangin/Helyanan and Tinal/Abd Muis appear to have crossed this threshold. That said, the margin between them is very close. Our sources said the losing candidates were almost certain to challenge the results, once they are finally announced.

COMMENTS FROM FREEPORT

17. (C) Freeport-McMoRan is monitoring the race closely. August Kafiari, a long-time Mimika community leader who directs government relations for Freeport, told poloff that he was cautiously optimistic that the vote counting, and any subsequent challenge, would proceed peacefully. He added, however, that the longer the situation remained unresolved, the more likely people were to become frustrated and angry. He could not rule out the possibility of violence although he

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saw no indication of imminent unrest.

A VOLATILE AREA

18. (C) Like some other parts of Papua, the Mimika region is volatile politically with various tribal/ethnic flashpoints. Some of these endemic tensions exploded into violence last November. Given that and the extensive mining interests in the region, the GOI is monitoring the situation closely. On the positive side--in line with hundreds of other Indonesian localities which have experienced their first ever direct elections in recent years--this was the first such election in Mimika's history.

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